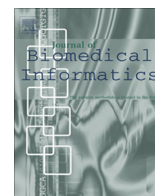


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Editorial

JBIM moves to new publishing models



As our readers know, the world of scientific publishing is undergoing tumultuous change. Publications such as the *Journal of Biomedical Informatics* (JBIM) have needed to monitor those changes and adapt our publishing and editorial model accordingly. Longtime readers of JBIM will know that, in recent years, we introduced an open archive, meaning that all JBIM papers are made freely available in ScienceDirect twelve months after publication. For those authors who want their accepted papers to be available open access from the day of publication, we have also introduced an optional “unlock fee” that authors may choose to pay. We believe that this mixed model, where some authors can elect open access but others can have their paper available only to subscribers for the first twelve months until it moves into the open archive, is the fairest way to support open access while not requiring all authors to pay for it at the time of publication.

In keeping with our effort to adjust our publishing model to the changing nature of scientific publishing, JBIM is introducing several new changes in 2015. First, JBIM is gradually moving to become an online-only journal, with hard copies available for printing on demand. We (and most other journals) have data to show that essentially all access to JBIM is now online, and such access typically results because of links to a specific article found via Medline/PubMed or another search engine rather than by perusing individual issues. Of course there are still some readers who check the JBIM website in ScienceDirect from time to time to see what has been published in recent months, but this accounts for a minority of accesses to our individual articles.

Furthermore, a frequent concern expressed by our authors is that, after their paper is accepted, the final issue in which their paper appears, including the complete citation with volume and page numbers, may not occur for many months – up to a year in some cases. We have addressed this issue in recent years by making accepted papers available online in ScienceDirect upon acceptance, with immediate indexing in Medline through use of the unique (and permanent) Digital Object Identifier (DOI) in lieu of volume and page numbers. Delays in final publication have been especially problematic for special issues, where the first paper accepted has been held for publication until the very last paper has been accepted and the analytical guest editorial has been written and is ready for publication.

JBIM is accordingly moving to a process known as “article-based publishing” (ABP), starting with the next issue. What this means is that, as soon as a paper is accepted, typeset, and ready for dissemination, it will be assigned to the next available space in the current issue. It will therefore get its volume and page numbers as soon as the corrected proof is completed and approved. The next

paper to be accepted will follow it. Every two months we will “close out” the current issue, formally compile it on ScienceDirect, and begin the process again with the next issue, starting with the next volume number and with page 1. Each issue will be its own volume (so that page numbering begins again in each issue) and there will no longer be an overall “design” of an issue; they will simply include two months of articles in the order in which they were accepted. Long wait times for authors to see their final paper with page numbers will disappear.

How, then, will this affect special issues? Our plan is to handle special issue papers exactly as we do all the others – slip them into an issue, with volume and page numbers, as soon as the corrected proof of the typeset version is complete. This means that the authors of the first papers accepted for inclusion in a special issue will not have to wait for the full issue to be completed before their paper appears. The special issue itself will be created at the very end, when all papers under consideration have been either accepted or rejected and the guest editorial has been written. We will then create a “virtual special issue” in ScienceDirect which will include the guest editorial and all accepted articles. The special issue will be labeled as such in ScienceDirect and will have a coherent identity. However, the papers will have been published over the last several regular issues of the journal and the “virtual issue” will simply include links to their locations in ScienceDirect (where they will already have been online for a while). JBIM is pioneering this approach and other journals may follow suit in time. Hard copies of special issues will still be available, but they will be “print on demand”.

To get a feel for how this will work, readers can look at the two “virtual special issues” that we have already created and made available (<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-biomedical-informatics/virtual-special-issues/>). The difference is that these two issues are retrospective analyses of papers previously published in JBIM, not collections of papers written in response to a call for papers. In addition, the initial virtual issues were created on our journal home page and not included in ScienceDirect. Elsevier is moving this capability to ScienceDirect so that both retrospective and prospective (with Calls for Papers) special issues will appear on the JBIM ScienceDirect site just like any other issues. The difference, of course, is that the virtual issues will have a table of contents that includes a guest editorial that discusses all the papers in the special issue, and those papers will be listed following the editorial, but their links will be to separate issues of JBIM that were created during previous months. Special issues will not have volume or page numbers, since the individual items will already have been published and will have such identifying information already.

In the case of retrospective special issues, these papers may be years old, but for special issues compiled in response to calls for papers they will all have been recently published.

We hope authors will be excited by these changes and recognize that they have been designed in response to a careful review of current practices and the need for evolving models in selected areas. Rest assured that these changes will in no way affect the content of JBI. Our editorial policies and criteria are unchanged, as is our acceptance/rejection rate (currently about 30% of submitted manuscripts are ultimately published). The growth in the size of the journal in recent years reflects a great increase in the number of submitted manuscripts and not a change in the chances that any individual paper will be accepted.

JBI's success has been due to the loyalty and commitment of its readers, reviewers, and editors. We thank all of you for your many contributions to the journal and encourage your feedback about the issues discussed here or anything else (praise or critique) that you feel should be brought to our attention.

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